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ABSTRACT

This module was developed to introduce users of norm-referenced tests (NRT) to procedures for conducting a survey of personal resources and a review of career goals and objectives, and to provide incentives and opportunities for test takers to find a personal meaning and value in the use of test results and assessment. The activities within the module are predicated on the use of NRTs to facilitate choice and change rather than evaluating growth and development. Trainees are thus taught to help clients construct a Resources Hierarchy that can be applied to personal planning and choosing in career development. The module consists of three activities providing trainees opportunities to practice conducting a review of personal resources, introducing environmental resources, and establishing career goals and objectives. The first activity, "Strengths and Weaknesses," encourages trainees in standardized group testing to examine the nature and extent of their own personal resources. The second activity, "Resources Hierarchy," helps to give aim to potentiality discovered through test interpretation and assessment procedures. The third activity, "Change Strategy," provides test users in training with opportunities to help future clients to set goals for themselves by examining the design and implementation of short-term and long-term goals. References are included with each activity. (TE)

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A Career Development Module for Standardized Group Testing

Michigan Department of Education
Career Guidance Project
1988-1989

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A Career Development Strategy for Users of Standardized Group Tests

Rationale

This module represents an attempt to use the results of norm-referenced tests (NRT), standardized group tests, to provide incentives for personal planning and choosing. The special application of test results discussed herein is to career development.

The module is based on a contemporary test interpretation rather than conventional test interpretation. The precedent, a designated contemporary test interpretation, is a counseling approach to the meaning, value, and use of human growth and development information. In brief, the counseling approach employed in a contemporary test interpretation is facilitative in contrast to the diagnostic/analytical approach of conventional test interpretation which is characteristically evaluative. The discussion that follows provides a brief overview of the nature and nurture of a contemporary test interpretation.

To begin with, and before considering what a contemporary test interpretation involves, let us consider the history of standardized group testing in terms of its service to society. The classic or conventional use of NRT is evaluative. Standardized group testing has been used most commonly to serve institutional needs for classification, selection, and placement. The results of NRT have served psychological, social, and industrial/organizational purposes amply if not admirably. While it has played a distinguished role in serving institutional needs, the traditional role of NRT in serving individuals is less estimable.

In fact, there is no reason why the results of NRT cannot serve individual needs with distinction, provided they are relegated to a part of the assessment process and do not constitute the whole of it, and provided they help people to make their own plans and choices. A contemporary use of the results of NRT is presented and promoted in this module as precedent for and as inspiration to career development. The facilitative model of test interpretation is best summarized by the following propositions that distinguish it from a conventional test interpretation:

Contemporary Test Interpretation

- promotes an active rather than passive participation in the assessment process by helping test takers learn how to interpret, assess, integrate, and use test results for themselves.

- is a facilitative alternative to evaluation and not an indictment of conventional test interpretation.

- fosters and promotes self-assessment.

- is exploratory rather than explanatory.

- encourages test takers to find a personal meaning, value, and use of the results of NRT.

- is process centered rather than measurement centered or product centered.

- facilitates personal choice and planned change.

Aspiring test users are trained to use a protocol that is designed to help test takers seek a personal meaning, value, and use of assessment. Trainees provide incentives and opportunities for test takers to examine, explore, and exercise potentiality. Trainees learn to employ systematic procedures that are designed to encourage test takers:

- to express personal needs and concerns about testing and test results

- to discover the nature and meaning of test scores

- to learn to interpret test results

- to compare and contrast test results with other interests and assets

- to examine relationships between test results and goals and objectives

- to consider the implications and applications of assessment for personal planning and choosing

Although this module is designed as a capstone experience in a Contemporary Test Interpretation, it is freestanding. Consequently, the module can be employed with little change to meet conventional needs for a culminating experience in courses on Standardized Group Testing where test results and career development are wed.

Targeted activities provide aspiring test users with opportunities to use acquired assessment skills to facilitate career development, first by putting test results into an assessment perspective and then by employing the assessment of personal resources to establish career goals and objectives.

Goal

The aim of a contemporary test interpretation is to promote a structured self-assessment that can facilitate personal choice and planned change. The aspiring test user provides incentives and opportunities for test takers to

- express needs for and concerns about assessment
- develop an understanding of test results
- make responses to estimates of potential
- seek a personal meaning of assessment
- examine the personal value of assessment
- explore the personal uses of assessment

The aim of this module is to introduce users of NRT to procedures for conducting a survey of personal resources and a review of career goals and objectives. Trainees are taught and trained to help clients construct a Resources Hierarchy that can be applied to personal planning and choosing, herein with a special application to career development.

Summary

In this module, trainees learn to provide incentives and opportunities for test takers to find a personal meaning, value, and use of test results and assessment. Although the module is freestanding, activities are predicated on facilitating choice and change rather than evaluating growth and development.

In the effort to make counseling uses of NRT, trainees in Standardized Group testing are taught to introduce test takers to ways and means to integrate test results into an assessment perspective. Activities provide trainees opportunities to practice (a) conducting a review of personal resources, (b) introducing environmental resources, and (c) establishing career goals and objectives. Thus, the purpose of this four-hour module is to employ synthesized test results, which have been integrated into an assessment perspective, to abet personal planning and choosing.

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Preface to Activities

Three activities follow. The activities span four hours. Within certain constraints, personal discretion governs the allocation of time devoted to each of the activities. The first of the three activities is introspective in that the activity is devoted to self-examination by the trainee. The second and third activities are training simulations devoted to the principle of learning by doing, that is, guiding trainees through the practice of conducting a contemporary test interpretation with a career development focus. Again, these activities are freestanding, applicable to contemporary or conventional test interpretation in a career development context.

Three skills/competencies are described to facilitate the conduct of activities two and three:

Soliciting active participation in assessment

- by providing opportunities and incentives that inspire the test taker/client to find a personal meaning, value, and use of NRT results.

Relating assessments to potentiality

- by encouraging the test taker/client to relate test results to other criteria in a Resources Hierarchy (to be introduced in Activity II).

Clarifying plans and choices

- by fostering an examination of goals and objectives in formulating a Change Strategy (to be introduced in Activity III).

The idea is to provide the aspiring test user being trained and educated in classes on Standardized Group Testing with learning opportunities. Simulated practices provide experience in using procedures that are designed to encourage active participation in assessment, to foster planning and choosing, and to promote responsible self-direction.

Activity I/Strengths & Weaknesses

This activity focuses on the personal development of the aspiring test user in contrast to activities that follow, which focus on the professional development of the aspiring test user. Activity I encourages trainees in standardized group testing to examine the nature and extent of their own personal resources. The object is to help trainees become aware of how they and others assign meaning and value to strengths and weaknesses before they attempt to facilitate the career development of future test takers.

As noted above, prior to employing the Resources Hierarchy and the Change Strategy, to be introduced in the activities that follow this one, aspiring test users are provided with an opportunity to assess their own strengths and weaknesses. This procedure is a simple one of listing perceived strengths on one side of a sheet of paper and perceived weaknesses on the other side of the paper.

Allow 10 minutes for writing lists. Then, ask the participants to share their thoughts about the lists they have created.

Discussion is open and should be spontaneous, of course. Nevertheless, certain issues about strengths and weaknesses should be addressed for discussion if they are not raised by trainees in standardized group testing. Three themes of special importance should be addressed, whether brought up by students in a standardized group testing class, or introduced by the instructor of a standardized group testing class. First, the nature and extent of the lists of strengths and weaknesses can be revealing of attitudes about self-worth. Second, an analysis of the balance or imbalance of strengths can be promoted to advantage, because of cultural warrants to be humble, etc. Third, differences among academic, social, racial, and ethnic groups can inspire thoughtfulness, because they can vary in ways that bring qualms about fairness and opportunity.

The entire experience of listing and discussing strengths and weaknesses need not exceed three-quarters of an hour and probably should not exceed an hour. Forthcoming activities will require at least three hours, so time devoted to each activity is an important consideration.

TENET: Human potentiality needs to be examined and explored before it can be exercised. To become aware of the nature and extent of one's potentiality is to begin to consider how to employ and apply human potentiality.

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Activity II/Resources Hierarchy.

This activity is one of two devoted to the professional development of trainees in standardized group testing. That is, aspiring test users are provided with the means and opportunity to practice conducting a Resources Hierarchy.

The Resources Hierarchy helps to give aim to potentiality discovered through test interpretation and assessment procedures. The Hierarchy provides an incentive and a direction to the exploration of resources. Once completed, the participant will begin to have some idea of the targets at which potentiality can be most profitably directed.

The Hierarchy provides an integregated plan for comparing and contrasting test results to other human growth and development information and, from there, proceeds to examine and explore related issues as follows:

1) SURVEY Interests

2) COMPARE & CONTRAST Interests

3) IDENTIFY Strengths

4) PRIORITIZE Strengths

Ideally, the process begins with opportunities for trainees in standardized group testing to practice a test interpretation. At the conclusion of the test interpretation, the trainee moves on to the Resources Hierarchy. First, the aspiring test user encourages the role-play test taker to survey interests. Then, the trainee in standardized group testing encourages the role player to consider how the test results achieved compare to other interests. After a time, the trainee encourages the role player to attempt to identify strengths and, finally, to try to prioritize strengths.

How to provide the simulated practice, what particular ingredients to include, and who monitors the practice are matters left to the discretion of instructors who provide the activity. Nevertheless, roles for the simulation need to be developed to some extent and some coaching of role players will be required in order to provide a meaningful training experience. Certainly flexibility is encouraged, but practices must provide ample opportunity to address the Resources Hierarchy if the learning-by-doing activity is going to benefit the aspiring test user.

In addition to the practice, and nearly as important, is feedback. Two sources of feedback should be provided. One source of feedback is provided by the monitor(s) assigned to each practicing trainee. The other source is the instructor/trainer who can circulate and observe various practice efforts and report on them to the entire class.

The aim of the aspiring test user is to help future test takers consider their test results in light of attributes, grades, experiences, achievements, goals, influences, attitudes, etc. An assessment perspective can provide a personal meaning, value, and use of seemingly random bits of human growth and development information.

Putting test results into an assessment perspective can mean several things, and many interests can be included in the development of the perspective. If an instructor in standardized group testing is so inclined, it is certainly possible to employ a random or relatively unstructured approach to developing an assessment perspective. Also available for use is a little more structured approach to developing an assessment perspective.

An UNSTRUCTURED approach to self-assessment simply means there is no particular order in which personal attributes and attitudes are compared and contrasted, and the assessment may not include the same elements from individual to individual. Nevertheless, because it is not orderly, does not necessarily mean it is haphazard.

After having discussed the meaning of test results, the aspiring test user can start the resources exploration. In the random or flexible approach, aspiring test users simply encourage their role-playing test takers to examine various relationships between test results and, say, any or all of the following:

- personality characteristics
- hobbies
- skills
- hopes and aspirations
- expectations
- work and life experiences

A SAMPLE OF THE DIALOGUE for this part of the exploration of resources follows:

> " . . . besides the way you have compared test results . . . there are other comparisons you can make . . . for instance, the way your test results compare to your skills . . . hobbies . . . grades."

Rather than a random approach to the identification of resources, an organized, patterned approach is available and recommended. We will call this procedure EMIT. It is a STRUCTURED way of conducting self-assessment. Most importantly, test takers can employ the approach to assess their potentiality for themselves in the future.

The aim of this procedure is to provide a simple and manageable system for clients to compare and contrast their test results with other human growth and development information. Four elements are prominent in EMIT

system. The EMIT system comprises classic interests:

E xpresed Interests = what people say they want to know, do, or be

M anifest Interests = what people engage in because they choose to

I nventoried Interests = what people seem to have inclination toward

T ested Interests = what people seem to have aptitude for

The idea is to discover and develop an assessment foundation that puts test results into a proper perspective. The foregoing is the foundation for seeking the value of test results by putting them into perspective with other human growth and development information.

A SAMPLE OF THE DIALOGUE for this part of the exploration of resources follows:

> "Now that you've considered your test results, I'd like to show you a systematic way of discovering other qualities you possess . . . called EMIT."

Having completed the survey of interests and provided an opportunity for the role player to compare and contrast interests, the next step in the hierarchy is to provide an incentive and opportunity for the role player to identify strengths and, then, to prioritize those strengths.

A SAMPLE OF THE DIALOGUE for this part of the exploration of resources follows:

> " . . . having examined your interests and compared them, I'm wondering how you view your strengths . . . and now that you've identified a number of strengths . . . wonder how you view them . . . in terms of which are most important or useful to you . . ."

This activity can take several hours, depending on how much time is devoted to providing all trainees with practice experiences. Ideally, the practice should be confined to about an hour-and-a-half with feedback included. Consequently, small practice groups of no more than three are recommended to insure that all trainees can practice and monitor practice as well as take a turn at role player.

TENET: Often, the reason people of any age flounder in career development is because they have no integrated concept of their resources and potentiality. Consequently, people can drift into careers simply because they have no targets at which to take aim. The Resources Hierarchy can help people begin to take aim.

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Activity III/Change Strategy

This activity provides test users in training with opportunities to help future test takers/clients set goals for themselves by employing Change Strategy. The Strategy promotes an examination of the way that short-term and long-term goals are characteristically designed and implemented.

First, the test taker/client is asked to state or write down personal goals s/he has set and achieved within the past year. The only condition that must be met to qualify is that the test taker/client has set a goal and then gone about achieving it. This procedure will provide some idea of the nature and extent of short-term planning the test taker/client has undertaken.

Subject to the same restrictions mentioned above, and in about the same manner, a trainee can have the test taker/client go back two or more years in order to examine long-term planning. This procedure can add another dimension of understanding to client planning.

SAMPLE OF THE DIALOGUE for this part of the planning and choosing procedure follows:

> " . . . now that you've had an opportunity to determine how some of your skills and abilities can become strengths . . . maybe we can turn our attention to another matter . . . how to use those strengths to achieve things for yourself . . . I was thinking of how you usually make plans and choices . . . those that are, say, plans you've made and carried out in the last year . . . and how about plans you've made, say, two or three years ago and carried out?"

When completed, the test user and test taker will have a compendium of past goals set and achieved over a short term and over a long term. Next, the test taker/client can begin to consider the kinds of future goals s/he wants to set, either short term or long term. The basis of future planning is established by reviewing past goal-setting practices.

SAMPLE OF THE DIALOGUE for this part of the planning and choosing procedure follows:

> " . . . maybe now would be a good time to look forward . . . and for you to do a little planning ahead . . . like a year from now . . . and two or even five years from now . . . and we could talk about the choices you'd be making and how you would go about acting on the those plans--or goals."

In the course of employing the Change Strategy, issues about planning and choosing are raised for client consideration. Patterns of planning, differences between short-term and long-term planning, past and future planning, commitment to goals, choice, and implementation are issues subject to review.

(Later, in actual practice, the test user may choose to adapt the procedure described above. The scenario above can just as easily, and sometimes more beneficially, be tried out with groups of test takers. The benefits of group sharing can provide some valuable insights into the ways other test takers/clients set goals and provide incentives not available in individual interpretation interviews.)

This activity can take several hours, depending on how much time is devoted to providing all trainees with practice experiences. Ideally, the practice should be confined to about an hour-and-a-half with feedback included. Consequently, small practice groups of no more than three are recommended to insure that all trainees can practice and monitor practice as well as take a turn at role player.

TENET: We can benefit from short-term and long-term goals. In order to move ahead, we must first move along. Goals help us to move along. They provide us with targets. When we do not have proper targets for our ambitions, our efforts can be ineffectual and unfruitful. Setting goals and objectives can keep our prospects in perspective.

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